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ABSTRACT

As part of a study examining articles on composition at five-year intervals from 1971 through 1987 to explore the evolution of composition knowledge, a study examined articles published in "College Composition and Communication" (CCC) and "College English" (CE) during 1971-72 and 1976-77. A citation list was created by noting the author cited for each article, the title of the work cited, and the author who cited the work. Book reviews, poems, and various information from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication were excluded. The citation list was entered into a computer file, and information was collected concerning: (1) the names and works cited in a given year in each journal; (2) the number of times each author and work was cited; and (3) the number of different articles in which the citation occurred. For 1971-72, results indicated that although a significant relationship between composition and literary studies and an interest in psychology was revealed, overall the "composition community" did not reflect a central focus or common canon of works, scholars, or ideas to initiate a dialectical process of defining or revising composition knowledge. The year 1976-77 showed a continued interest in composition practice and psychology, and a greater attention to social issues and the role of composition in the university. (Citation lists for 1971-72 and 1976-77, and two tables of data are appended.) (MM)

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Defining Composition:

Evidence from the Citations, Years 1971-72 and 1976-77

Session I-18

The Social Context of Composition:

An Intertextual History

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A Paper Presentated at the

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Defining Composition:

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In Old Times on the Mississippi, Mark Twain, in one of his characteristically delightful digressions, explains that the course of the Mississippi River is constantly changing. Every so often, the river cuts straight through one of its S-like switchbacks and so shortens its length by 5, 10, sometimes 35 miles or more. Between the years 1760 and 1875, Twain tells us, the Lower Mississippi shortened itself 242 miles, or just over 1.3 miles each year. These facts set Mr. Twain to thinking. Any calm person, Twain reasons,

> who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oölitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago this November, the Lower Mississippi River was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing-rod. And by the same token any person can see that seven hundred and forty-two years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three quarters long, and Cairo [Illinois] and New Orleans will have joined their streets together. . . . There is something fascinating about science [Twain concludes]. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such trifling investment of fact.

Our own investment of fact will not yield such dramatic conclusions, and our reasoning is certainly less bold and straightforward. But we hope, nonetheless, to clarify somewhat the murky waters of Composition.

The title of our session is "The Social Context of Composition: An Intertextual History." The historical frame for our study extends some fifteen years, from September of 1971 through May of 1987. Quite simply, our purpose is to explore how Composition knowledge has evolved in these fifteen years.

As the session's title suggests, our study takes a social constructionist perspective. Briefly stated, social construction theory holds that knowledge is constructed within and is determined by a social context and community. Kenneth Bruffee explains that knowledge is created by, promulgated by, and revised by a community of like-minded members. As a "social artifact," knowledge is "what together we agree it is" by participating "in a process of socially justifying belief. . . . [Knowledge] is the product of human beings in a state of continual negotiation or conversation" (646-47). Language is the medium through which such knowledge is consciously thought about, communicated, and reified. In turn, that knowledge shapes the culture that creates it. In a sense, then, knowledge is ~~be~~ organic -- always growing, changing, becoming something else. It is the evolutionary product of dialectical processes.

As a "social artifact," though, knowledge can, in an historical sense, be captured in a moment in time. Whatever is captured, of course, must be interpreted, and the legitimate interpretation would take into account the context in which the artifactual knowledge was found and the context and time in which the artifact resurfaces or is re-presented for analysis and interpretation. The past not only shapes the present, but the present reshapes the past. The knowledge agreed upon by a community influences that community's interpretation of its own history.

Interpreting a discipline's intellectual history, Twain would agree, can be a tricky business. Perhaps the best we can do is to define, first of all, the community whose knowledge we want to study; second, search for the right kinds of artifacts within that community; and third, look at those artifacts in their original contexts and, if they re-emerge, in their more recent contexts also.

The community we are studying is the family of Composition specialists. Our archeological sites, if you will, are the articles published in College Composition and Communication and in College English at five-year intervals from 1971 through 1987, specifically the years 1971-72, 1976-77, 1981-82, and 1986-87. A more specific kind of artifactual evidence -- and the kind we are most concerned with here -- is the intertextual network of works and names cited in those articles.

We chose to look at College Composition and Communication and College English because they are the two journals in our field that have been with us long enough to allow for a 15-year retrospective, with the exception of Research in the Teaching of English. We chose not to include RTE in our study, though, because its scope is sharply focused on a single mode of inquiry, empirical reseacrch, and so its knowledge and community are more narrowly defined than the knowledge and community that inhabit the larger community represented by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. We looked at five-year intervals of CCC and CE because we wanted cross-section samples that would allow us to detect the emergence, continuation, fading, and revision of ideas that compose the body of knowledge in Composition.

The articles in CCC and CE, then, are the primary sources of our information, the readily accessible sites of our archeological digs, so to speak. But on what ideas and assumptions were those articles founded? Aside from appearing in the same journals, what do the articles have in common? What knowledge base and what professional and social contexts do these articles and their authors share? How can we characterize or define the community of voices we hear in these articles? Indeed, do these voices even belong to the kind of unified community described by Paul Diesing in Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences? According to Diesing, the members of a community

> read and use each other's ideas, discuss each other's work, and sometimes collaborate. . . . Their interaction is facilitated by shared beliefs and values -- goals, myths, terminology, self-concepts -- which make their work mutually intelligible and valuable (117).

In the field of Composition, these "shared beliefs and values," if they exist, should show up in articles published by the Composition community. In particular, this shared knowledge should turn up in the recurrent references or citations within the published articles. Thus the title of my presentation, "Defining Composition: Evidence from the Citations."

Unfortunately, there are no appropriate indexes of these citations, so we had to create our own citation list directly from the hundreds of articles in CCC and CE. At the minimum, our lists noted the author cited in an article, the title of the work cited, and the author who cited the work. We did not include every piece appearing in CCC and CE in our growing data base of citations. Time constraints and relevance led us to exclude certain types of pieces.

For example, we excluded book reviews, poems, and various information from NCTE and the Conference on College Composition and Communication. We assumed that if the books reviewed or the NCTE/CCCC propositions and resolutions were going to have an influence on the field, that influence

would show up in the more standard types of CCC and CE articles. We also excluded from CCC the "Jeu D'esprit" pieces.

We retained in our lists, in addition to feature articles, the "Staffroom Interchange" pieces from CCC because they deal directly with pedagogical practice. We also included the "Counterstatement" articles from CCC and the "Comment and Rebuttal" pieces from CE because they perhaps most clearly sponsor the dialectical negotiation of knowledge in the Composition community.

Once we compiled complete lists of citations, Ed entered them into a computer file, and with the help of a software program, we were able to receive answers to the following questions: Which names and works were cited in a given year in each journal, and how many times and in how many different articles? This information would tell us which articles or authors retained or increased their influence over the five-year intervals and which ones enjoyed relatively short-lived influence. The information would also suggest which schools of inquiry were influential in which years, and which ones continued to shape the discipline's body of knowledge over the years. Finally, this information could provide insight not just into which figures continued to influence the field, but also into whether their perspectives, aims, modes of inquiry, and influence remained relatively constant or changed. If they changed, would it be possible to trace the course of that

change, and even the agents of such change?

The citations could also tell us something about how the discipline was influenced by concerns outside the narrow boundaries of Composition studies or how Composition defined itself in relation to other disciplines, such as linguistics or literary studies, or how the Composition community responded to sociological concerns such as open admissions, the "Back to Basics" cry, the "Johnny Can't" pronouncements, or minority rights issues. In short, the citations data could provide some evidence of that elusive trace, the intertextual network of ideas that defines the conception of "community" held by scholars in the field of Composition and those scholars' place within the larger society and its myriad smaller communities. All this, of course, is subject to interpretation, that fascinating science of conjecture.

FINDINGS

Years 1971-72

Perhaps the most I can say about 1971-72 is that there's not much to say. There are some rather obvious generalizations to make, but there's little in the artifacts to define very specifically the essential character of Composition in 1971-72. Maybe that's the scoop. There is, however, some evidence to indicate how Composition relates to its sister community, Literary studies, and to the larger society and its interests.

Let's take one of the rather obvious observations first. If you look at the "Most-Cited Authors" list, you will see in the right-hand column, under CE, a list of authors cited. The names followed by an asterisk are names of authorities cited because of what they have to say about literature. Of the 18 names cited four or more times, 13 are literary critics or scholars. The other five authorities cited have interests in sociolinguistics, educational psychology, psycholinguistics, and composition pedagogy. There are two points to be made here.

The first is that literature studies most concerns the readership of College English. If you glance at the last page in the handout, you will see a classification according to subject matter of the feature articles in CCC and CE in 1971-72. As those numbers point out, 30 of the 53 feature articles published in CE in 1971-72 focus on literature, 19 of them literary theory. The remaining 23 articles are

about evenly divided among Composition, Professional and Curricular Concerns, and Linguistics. The balance sheet has changed in more recent issues of College English. As Mr. Raymond pointed out in an article last Septmeber, a piece titled "College English: Whence and Whither," when Richard Ohmann became of editor of CE in 1966, he announced that the journal would no longer publish critical explications of single works unless those pieces would directly relate to critical theory, pedagogy, or curriculum. As years passed, Mr. Raymond tells us, "Somehow, after discouraging certain kinds of articles about literature, College English came to be perceived as a journal devoted to composition and pedagogy" (554). This shift in perception, Mr. Raymond explains, caused a shift in the kinds of articles submitted to CE, so that now the largest single type of articles appearing in CE concern composition, with literature and criticism distant seconds. My reason for stepping out of the past into the present is this. In 1971-72, College English remained a journal devoted to literary matters. The list of authors most often cited and the kinds of feature articles published indicate that Composition, as a community or as a discipline, was not very coherently structured or empowered.

The second point I want to make about the citations in 1971-72 concerns this non-existent coherent center. If we look again on the CE side of the "Most-Cited Authors" page, we find, as I have said, 13 literary scholars with four or

more citations. There is in literary studies a rather clear and obvious network of scholars and canons for other scholars to examine, interpret, and criticize. That is plainly not the case in Composition in 1971-72. If we look at the CCC citations for 1971-72, we see only nine authors cited twice or more. In fact, of the 122 citations in CCC for the year, only 21 of them (or about 17%) are references to authors cited more than once. That is, 101 of the 122 citations are single-source citations. To say it yet another way, 110 different authors were cited in a total of 122 citations. In contrast to the common knowledge existant in the Literature community, in the Composition community there is no central focus, no commonly agreed-upon canon of works, scholars, or ideas to initiate a dialectical process of defining and revising whatever the community considers to be knowledge.

There is one thing, however, that the articles and citations in CCC have in common, and that is an emphasis on what Stephen North, in The Making of Knowledge in Composition, calls Practitioner Lore, a kind of knowledge driven more by pragmatics than by scholarship or dialectic. Typically, Practitioner Lore is communicated orally, informally. Here again, the great number of articles in CCC that cite only one or no authority suggest that such nonreified knowledge largely informs the loosely connected Composition community.

One other point about the citations and articles in

1971-72 will not be readily apparent until we begin to look at the various names cited twice or more in CE. Under "Miscellaneous Others," I listed names that struck me as I looked through the 460 citations in CE. I noticed, first of all, an interest in psychology, as evidenced by the names of John Dewey, Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, R. D. Laing, and Carl Rogers. Given that Northrop Frye was the most-often cited scholar in CE in 1971-72, I suppose it isn't surprising to find references to these other students of psychology. Second, I noticed a number of names that still continue to carry influence in Composition circles, names that most new students of Composition would quickly recognize. Hence, while Composition may be without a center, it has numerous epicenters, so to speak, focal points of future activity.

Years 1976-77

The year 1976-77 shows a continued interest in composition practice and psychology, and an even greater attention to social issues and to the role of Composition in the university. We also find more impressive artifactual evidence of the beginnings of what can legitimately be called a Composition community.

I want to mention only in passing that, once again, most of the articles in CCC in 1976-77 concern pedagogy. A more topical concern this year is the role of language in society, specifically Johnny's inability to write or read and the public cry for "the basics." A glance at the citations list shows that Merrill Shiels, who wrote "Johnny Can't Write" for Newsweek, is cited three times in CCC and four times in CE. And from within the Conference on College Composition and Communication, there is the famous, or infamous, "Students' Rights to Their Own Language" resolution.

While many articles respond to these concerns merely by decrying the current sorry state of affairs inside and outside the classroom, we also have in the first article in the first issue of CCC for 1976 Mina Shaughnessy's "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." Important theoretically-grounded practices also show up in references to Ross Winterowd, Francis Christensen, Edward P. J. Corbett, James Moffett, and the triumverate of Young, Becker, and Pike -- all of whom stress rhetorical invention

and greater emphasis on the writing process as thoughtful ways of redressing the "writing crisis" initiated by Newsweek and open admissions. But as we see here, the most notable difference between 1971 and 1976 is the reliance on the work of an illustrious, albeit small, group of Composition scholars.

Sometimes a single figure can make a significant contribution to the community in such a way that others not only read and cite that author, but read and cite that author's citations. Such is the case more and more often in 1976-77, but I have time to give only one example, and that one is Janet Emig's "Writing as a Mode of Learning," published as the lead article in the May CCC. Aside from the major contribution of the article, itself, Emig's citations of Michael Polanyi, the Paris Review "Writers at Work" interviews, Lev Vygotsky, and James Britton, among others, begin to reappear again and again in other scholars' works. Emig's article and citations also suggest the increasing influence that cognitive psychology and process paradigms are beginning to have on the Composition community's modes of inquiry, a subject Ed will talk more about later.

Perhaps it is in College English, again, that we best see the forces of change in Composition. For one thing, the majority of feature articles are now about evenly divided between Composition and Literature. We also see in CE a greater number of authors and citations referring to the

role of Composition in the English department. Both the discipline of Composition and its Practitioners are often the subjects of fiesty debates. For instance, in addition to Richard Ohmann's "Language, Power, and the Teaching of English," we also have references to George Nash's "Who's Minding Freshman English?" and David Pichaske's article, whose title asks the seminal question, "Freshman Comp: What Is This Shit?" The social concern seemingly caused by Johnny and open admissions seems to be leading to an open questioning of the purpose and place of Composition. But there is concern from within the academy as well as from without, and I think the number of citations dealing specifically with composition and the names cited indicate an incipient coalescence of a Composition community.

My final observation is that the 1976-77 bibliographical artifacts point toward a significant interest in expressive reading theory, that is, the kind of transactional reading theory espoused by Stanley Fish and Norman Holland, who garnered six and five citations, respectively. We also see references to Roland Barthes, David Bleich, Johathan Culler, and Wolfgang Iser. The New Criticism of, say, Cleanth Brooks, who was cited three times in 1971-72, with its emphasis on the sacredness of the text, has been replaced in 1976-77 by a critical theory emphasizing the reader's interaction with the text and the larger community of readers who interact with and interpret the same text. The dialectical process has been hard at

work in the older and established Literature community, and Composition has gained from that dialectic. In 1976-77, Composition is beginning also to look more closely at the process of meaning-making and invention rather than looking only at the product, Johnny's text. The shift appears to be toward Johnny's writing (participle emphasized) rather than his five-paragraph theme.

The good story-teller, Twain says, knows when to pause. The considerate speaker knows when to stop. I have presented what I see to be some of the changes of course Composition has taken over the last fifteen years. Like Twain's Mississippi River, it snakes around islands, shifts its sand bars, and turns back on itself; it branches off from its main currents to cut new beds that fertilize previously arid grounds. I hope that my "trifling investment of fact" has cleared some of the waters, even if I have not been able to join the streets of Cairo and New Orleans.

Most-Cited Authors in CCC and CE for 1971-72 and 1976-77

Below is a list of the authors cited most often in College Composition and Communication and College English during 1971-72 and 1876-77. Under "Cit" we list the total number of citations, under "Tls" the number of different titles cited, and under "Art" the number of articles in which the citations appear.

1971-72

CCC

Author	Cit	Tls	Art
Zoellner, R.	4	2	4
Richards, I.A.	3	3	2
Winterowd, W.R.	3	3	2
Friere, P.	2	2	1
Gardner, B.T.	2	2	1
Isocrates	2	2	1
Mager, R.	2	1	1
Williamson, R.	2	1	2
Perrin & Smith	2	1	1

Total citations: 122

CE

Author	Cit	Tls	Art
Frye, N.*	11	6	6
Wimsatt, W.K.*	9	6	6
Labov, W.	7	4	2
Halle & Keyser*	6	5	2
Perrine, L.*	5	5	3
Wolf, H.R.	5	5	3
Chomsky, N.	5	5	2
Plato*	5	3	3
Poulin, A.*	5	2	3
Morse, J.M.*	4	4	2
Jakobson, R.*	4	3	3
Eliot, T.S.*	4	3	2
Stewart, W.A.	4	3	2
Weinmann, R.*	4	3	1
Magnuson, K.*	4	2	3
Beardsley, M.*	4	2	2
Elbow, P.	4	2	2
Gottfried, R.B.*	4	2	2
Miscellaneous Others			
Aristotle	2	2	2
Berthoff, A.E.	2	2	2
Braddock, R.	2	2	2
Dewey, J.	2	2	2
Diederich, P.B.	2	1	2
Erikson, E.	2	2	1
Freud, S.	2	2	2
Gorrell, R.M.	2	2	1
Laing, R.D.	2	2	1
Langer, S.	3	2	2
Moffett, J.	2	2	1
O'Neill, W.	3	3	3
Ohmann, R.	3	2	3
Ong, W.J.	2	2	2
Richards, I.A.	2	2	1
Rogers, C.	2	2	1
Shuy, R.	2	2	1

Total Citations: 460

*These authors are cited exclusively or predominantly in articles about literature.

1976-77

CCC

Author	Cit	Tls	Art
Bruner, J.S.	5	4	2
Winterowd, W.R.	3	3	3
Burke, K.	3	3	3
Christensen, F.	3	2	3
Shiels, M.	3	1	3
Young, Becker, Pike	3	1	3
Corbett, E.P.J.	2	2	2
Hymes, D.	2	2	2
Richards, I.A.	2	2	2
Kelly, L.	2	2	1
Rodgers, P.C.	2	2	1
Schulz, M.	2	2	1
Bain, A.	2	1	2
Emig, J.	2	1	2
Moffett, J.	2	1	2

Total Citations: 159

CE

Author	Cit	Tls	Art
Fish, S.*	6	5	2
Leavis, F.R.*	6	6	1
Holland, N.*	5	4	3
Ohmann, R.	4	3	4
Richards, I.A.*	4	3	4
Labov, W.	4	3	3
"Johnny" [Shiels, M.]	4	1	4
Barthes, R.*	3	3	3
MacDonald, D.	3	3	1
Ong, W.J.*	3	3	1
Orwell, G.	3	3	1
Pitkin, W.	3	2	1
Blinderman, A.*	3	1	3
Crews, F.*	3	1	3
Morse, J.M.	2	2	2
Pixton, W.H.	2	2	2
Hirsch, E.D.*	2	2	1
Macrorie, K.	2	2	1
Pichaske, D.R.	2	1	2
Winterowd, W.R.	2	1	2

Total Citations: 420

	1971 - 1972		1976 - 1977	
	CCC	CE	CCC	CE
Composition:				
Practice	6 (2)*	5	24 (1)*	25
Scholarship	2	3	6	
Literature:				
Practice		9		9
Explication		2		3
Theory		19		10
Professional Concerns and Curriculum:	6	8 (2)*	7 (1)*	4
Linguistics:				
Psycho	2 (1)*	2 (1)*	2 (1)*	(3)*
Socio		5 (1)*	2	3 (1)*
General Language and Usage:	4			
Language and Society:	2	(1)*	1(4)*	
Miscellaneous	1		1	17

* Numbers within parentheses refer to the number of articles that also fit under another category. Parentheses indicate the secondary category.

Type and frequency of feature articles appearing in College Composition and Communication and College English in 1971-72 and 1976-77.